

newsletter

Sent: Thursday, March 06, 2008 11:26 PM
Subject: BCDNewsFlash - House Passes Mental Health Parity Bill!
BCD NewsFlash from the Center for Clinical Social Work/ABE

House Passes Mental Health Parity Bill!

On Tuesday March 5, 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (HR 1424), sponsored by Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN), by a vote of 268-148, with 47 Republicans joining 221 Democrats. The Senate has already passed a different version of this bill. The two bills will now go to a House-Senate conference committee to craft a final bill.

For two years, the Center for Clinical Social Work/ABE has been alerting you to opportunities to contact your Representatives and Senators to support these bills. We hope that you took advantage of these advisories!

This is a major achievement. For years, a Mental Health Parity Bill had been introduced but failed to make it to a vote in Congress, so this development is very heartening as an indicator that Congress has finally recognized the importance of access to mental healthcare. To generalize, the House bill would require that health insurers cover illnesses and disorders listed in the DSM-IV at the level that they cover other illnesses, while the Senate bill would give insurers more leeway on coverage. The White House and business groups favor the Senate version, so the struggle for true mental health parity is not over.

As a member of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), the Center/ABE will work with others toward passage of the best bill possible. Along the way, we will keep you informed of our progress and will give you opportunities to make your opinion known.